اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer
Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah 107 – Al- Maun (The Small Kindnesses)

سُوْرَةُ الْمَاعُوْنِ مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

اَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِيْ يُكَذِّبُ بِالدِّيْنِ ﴿١﴾

(107-1) Did you see him [1] who gives the lie to the Reward and Punishment [2] of the Hereafter? [3]

(1) The words “have you seen”, apparently, are directed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), but the Quranic style is that on such occasions it generally addresses every intelligent and thinking person. And seeing means seeing with the eyes, for what has been described in the succeeding verses can be seen by every seer with his eyes, as well as knowing, understanding and considering something deeply. If the word araaita is taken in the second meaning, the verse would mean: Do you know the kind of man who belies the rewards and punishments. Or: Have you considered the state of the person who belies the Judgment?

(2) The word ad-din as Quranic term is used for the rewards and punishments of the Hereafter as well as for the religion of Islam. But the theme that follows is more relevant to the first meaning, although the second meaning is also not out of the context. Ibn Abbas has preferred the second meaning, while a majority of the commentators have preferred the first. In case the first meaning is taken, the theme of the Surah would mean that denial of the Hereafter produces such and such a character in man. In case the second meaning is taken, the object of the Surah would be to highlight the moral importance of Islam, to stress that Islam aims at producing an altogether different character in its adherents from that found in its deniers.

(3) The style shows that the object of asking this question at the outset is not to ask whether he has seen the person or not,

but to invite the listener to consider as to what kind of character is produced in man when he denies the judgment of the Hereafter, and to urge him to know the kind of the people who belie this creed so that he tries to understand the moral significance of belief in the Hereafter.

فَذٰلِكَ الَّذِي يَدُعُّ الْيَتِيمَ ﴿٢﴾

(107-2) Such is (4) the one who repulses the orphans away, (5)

(4) The letter fa in the sentence fa-dhalika-alladhi expresses the meaning of a whole sentence, which is to this effect: If you do not know, then know that it is indeed he who drives away the orphan. Or, it gives the meaning: Because of his this very denial of the Hereafter he is the kind of man who drives away the orphan.

(5) The sentence yadu ul yatim as used in the original, has several meanings:

(1) That he deprives the orphan of his rights and evicting him from his father's heritage thrusts him away.
(2) That if an orphan comes to ask him for help, he repulses him instead of showing him any compassion, and if he still persists in his entreaties in the hope for mercy, he drives him away and out of sight.
(3) That he ill-treats the orphan.

For example, if in his own house there is a closely related orphan, it is the orphans lot to serve the whole house, to receive rebuffs and suffer humiliation for trivial things. Besides, this sentence also contains the meaning that the person does not behave unjustly and tyrannically only occasionally but this is his habit and settled practice. He does not have the feeling that it is an evil which he must give up, but he persists in it with full satisfaction, thinking that the orphan is a helpless, powerless creature; therefore, there is no harm if his rights are taken away

wrongfully, or he is made the target of tyranny and injustice, or he is repulsed and driven away whenever he asks for help.

In this connection, Qadi Abul Hasan al-Mawardi has related a strange incident in his Aalam an-Nubuwwat. Abu Jahl was the testator of an orphan. The child one day came to him in the condition that he had no shred of a garment on his body and he implored him to be given something out of his father's heritage. But the cruel man paid no attention to him and the poor child had to go back disappointed. The Quraish chiefs said to him out of fun: Go to Muhammad (peace be upon him) and put your complaint before him. He will recommend your case before Abu Jahl and get you your property. The child not knowing any background of the nature of relationship between Abu Jahl and the Prophet (peace be upon him) and not understanding the motive of the mischief-mongers, went straight to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and apprised him of his misfortune. The Prophet (peace be upon him) immediately arose and accompanied the child to the house of Abu Jahl, his bitterest enemy. Abu Jahl received him well and when the latter told him to restore to the child his right, he yielded and brought out whatever he owed to him. The Quraish chiefs were watching all this earnestly in the hope that an interesting altercation would take place between them. But when they saw what actually happened they were astounded and went to Abu Jahl and taunted him saying that he too perhaps had abandoned his religion. He said: By God, I have not abandoned my religion, but I so felt that on the right and left of Muhammad (peace be upon him) there was a spear which would enter my body if I acted against what he desired. This incident not only shows what was the attitude and conduct of the principal chiefs of the most civilized and noble tribe of Arabia towards the orphans and other helpless people in those days but it also shows what sublime character the Prophet (peace be upon him) possessed and what impact it had even on his bitterest enemies. A similar incident we have already related in(E.N. 5 of Surah Al-Anbiya), which points to the great moral superiority of the Prophet (peace be upon him) because of which the disbelieving Quraish branded him as a sorcerer.

وَ لَا يَحُضُّ عَلٰى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِيْنِ ۝٣

(107-3) and urges [6] not the feeding of the needy. [7]

(6) La yahuddu means that the person neither persuades his own self, nor tells the people of his household, to provide the poor man with his food, nor does he urge others to recognize the rights of the poor and needy people of society who are starving and do something to satisfy their hunger.

Here, by giving only two conspicuous examples, Allah has pointed out what kind of evils are produced in the people who deny the Hereafter. The real object is not to point out only these two evils that the people drive away the orphans and do not urge giving away the food of the poor as a result of the denial of the Hereafter. But of the countless evils which are thus produced, two evils have been presented as an example, which every noble and sound-natured person will regard as hateful. Besides, another thing meant to be impressed is that if this very man had believed that he would have to go before God to render an account of his deeds, he would not have committed such evils as to deprive the orphan of his rights, tyrannize him, repulse him, neither feed the poor man himself nor urge others to give him his food. The characteristics of the believers in the Hereafter which have been described in Surah Al-Asr and Surah Al-Balad are that they exhort one another to mercy, and they exhort one another to the truth and to render the rights of others.

(7) The words used are to taam-il-miskin and not itam-ilmiskin. If itam-il-miskin were the words, the meaning would be that he does not urge (others) to feed the poor. But taam -il-miskin means that he does not urge (others) to give away the food of the poor. In other words, the food that is given to the poor man is not the food of the giver but of the poor man himself; it is his right which is enjoined on the giver, and the giver is not doing him any favor but rendering him his right. This same thing had been said in Surah Adh-Dharuyat: And in their possessions is a due share of him who asks and of him who is needy. (Verse 19).

فَوَيۡلٞ لِّلۡمُصَلِّينَ ٤

(107-4) Woe, then, to those who pray, (8)

(8) The fa in fa-wail-ul -lil-musallin signifies that such was the condition of the open deniers of the Hereafter. One may then consider the condition of the hypocrites who are included among the praying ones (i.e. Muslims). Since, despite being Muslims they regard the Hereafter as a falsehood, one may note what path of ruin they are following.

Though musallin means the praying ones, in view of the context in which this word has been used and the characteristics of these people that follow, this word, in fact, does not have the meaning of the praying ones but of the people of salat, i.e. of those included among Muslims.

ٱلَّذِينَ هُمۡ عَن صَلَاتِهِمۡ سَاهُونَ ٥

(107-5) but are heedless in their Prayers, (9)

(9) The words used are an-salat-i him sahun and not fi salati-him ahun. In case the words fi salat-i him had been used, the meaning would be that they forget in the course of their Prayer. But forgetting in the course of the Prayer is no sin in the eyes of the Shariah, nothing to say of its being hypocrisy, nor is it a fault or anything blameworthy. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself sometimes forgot in the Prayer and to compensate for it he prescribed the method of sajdah sahv. On the contrary, an salat-i-him sahun means that they are neglectful of their Prayer. Whether they perform the Prayer, or do not perform it, it is of little importance to them. They are not regular at the Prayers. When they perform it, they do not observe the prescribed times, but offer it carelessly at the eleventh hour. Or, when they rise up for the Prayer, they rise up and perform it with an unwilling heart, as if it were a calamity imposed on them. They play with their garments, yawn and betray absence of every trace of Allah’s remembrance in their hearts. Throughout the Prayer they show no feeling at all that they are performing the Prayer, nor of what they

are reciting; their minds wander and they perform articles of the Prayer without due attention; they somehow perform a semblance of the Prayer and try to be rid of it as soon as possible. And there are many people who would perform the Prayer only when they must, otherwise the Prayer has no place in their lives. The Prayer time comes but they show no concern that it is the Prayer time; they hear the call to the Prayer but do not understand what the caller is calling to, whom he is calling and for what purpose. These in fact are the signs of absence of faith in the Hereafter. The claimants to Islam believe thus only because they do not believe that they would be rewarded for performing the Prayer, nor have the faith that they would be punished for not performing it. On this very basis, Anas bin Malik and Ata bin Dinar say: Thanks to God that he said an salat-ihim and not fi salat-i-him. That is, we do forget in the course of the Prayer but we are not forgetful and neglectful of it; therefore, we shall not be counted among the hypocrites.

The Quran at another place has described this state of the hypocrites, thus: They come to offer their Prayer but reluctantly, and they spend in the way of Allah with unwilling hearts. (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 54). The Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah has said: This is the Prayer of the hypocrite; this is the Prayer of the hypocrite; this is the Prayer of the hypocrite! He watches the sun at the Asr time until when it reaches between the two horns of Satan (i.e. when the time of sunset approaches), he gets up and performs the Prayer carelessly, in which he remembers Allah but little. (Bukhari, Muslim, Musnad Ahmad). Musab bin Saad has related from his father, Saad bin Abi Waqqas: When I asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) about the people who are neglectful of their Prayer, he said: These are the people who perform their Prayers when the prescribed time for it has passed. (Ibn Jarir, Abu Yala, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn abi Hatim, Tabarani in Ausat; Ibn Marduyah, Baihaqi in As-Sunan). This tradition has been related as a statement of Saad himself also as a mauquf hadith and its sanad is stronger. Its being a marfu narration of the saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been regarded as weak by Baihaqi and Hakim). Another tradition from Musab is that he asked his father: Have you considered this verse? Does it mean

giving up the Prayer, or wandering of one's attention in the course of the Prayer, who among us has not his attention divided. He replied: No, it implies wasting the prescribed time of the Prayer and performing it when its time has elapsed. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Shaibah, Abu Yala, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Marduyah, Baihaqi in As-Sunan).

Here, one should understand that coming of other thoughts in the mind in the course of the Prayer is one thing and being unmindful of the Prayer and thinking other things during it quite another. The first state is a natural human weakness. Thoughts do interfere without intention, and as soon as a believer feels that his attention is wandering from the Prayer, he gathers it and brings it back to the Prayer. The other state is of being neglectful of the Prayer, for in it man only goes through an exercise of the Prayer mechanically, he has no intention of the remembrance of God in his heart. From the commencement of the Prayer till its completion his heart is not turned towards God even for a moment, and he remains engrossed in the thoughts with which he entered the Prayer.

الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَآءُونَ ۝٦

(107-6) those who do good (in order) to be seen, (10)

(10) This can be an independent sentence as well as one relating to the preceding sentence. In the first case, it would mean that they do not perform any act of goodness with a pure intention for the sake of God, but whatever they do, they do to be seen of others so that they are praised, are considered righteous, their good act is publicized and its advantage and benefit accrues to them here in the world. In the second case, the meaning would be that they pray to be seen. The commentators generally have preferred the second meaning, for at first sight it appears that it relates to the preceding sentence. Ibn Abbas says: It implies the hypocrites who prayed to be seen. They performed the Prayer if there was somebody to see them, but did not perform it if there was nobody to see them. In another tradition his words are to the effect: If they were alone they did not pray; but if there were

others, they prayed. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim , Ibn Marduyah, Baihaqi , in Ash-Shuab). In the Quran the hypocrites have been described thus: When they rise up for the salat, they go reluctantly to it, merely to be seen of people and they remember Allah but little. (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 142).

وَ يَمْنَعُوْنَ الْمَاعُوْنَ ۝۷

(107-7) and deny people the articles of common necessity. (11)

(11) The word used is maun. The view held by Ali, Ibn Umar, Saeed bin Jubair, Qatadah, Hasan Basri, Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, Dahhak, Ibn Zaid, Ikrimah, Mujahid, Ata and Zuhri is that it implies the zakat while Ibn Abbas, Ibn Masud, Ibrahim Nakhai, Abu Malik and many other scholars have expressed the opinion that it implies items of common use; for example, cooking-pot, bucket, hatchet, balance, salt, water, fire, flint (now its successor, the match-stick), etc. which the people generally borrow from each other. A statement of Saeed bin Jubair and Mujahid also supports it. Another view of Ali also is that it implies the zakat as well as the little courtesies and kindnesses of daily life. Ibn Abi Hatim has related from Ikrimah that maun of the highest form is zakat and of the lowest lending of a sieve, bucket, or needle to a borrower. Abdullah bin Masud says: We, the companions of Muhammad (peace be upon him), used to say, and according to other traditions, in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), used to say that maun implies lending of the cooking pot, hatchet, bucket, balance, and such other things. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Shaibah, Abu Daud, Nasai, Bazzar, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Tabarani in Al- Ausat, Ibn Marduyah, Baihaqi in As-Sunan). Saad bin Iyad without specifying any names has related almost the same view from the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), which shows that he had heard this from several companions. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Shaibah). Dailami, Ibn Asakir, and Abu Nuaim have related a tradition from Abu Hurairah in which he says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) explained this verse saying that it implies the hatchet, bucket and other such things. If this tradition is genuine, it probably did not come to the notice of

other scholars; otherwise it was not possible that other people should have given any other commentary of this verse.
Maun in fact is a small, little thing useful to the people. Accordingly, zakat also is maun, for it is a little amount out of much wealth, which one has to give away in order to help the poor, and the other small items of common use are also maun as mentioned by Abdullah Ibn Masud and the scholars who share his viewpoint. The majority of the commentators say that maun applies to all those small things which the neighbors usually ask each other for, and asking for these is not in any way blameworthy, for the rich and the poor, all stand in need of these at one time or another. However, to show stinginess in lending these is regarded as mean behavior morally. Generally these things by themselves last and the neighbor returns them in the original form after he has used them. It would also be maun if a neighbor asks the other for a bed or bedding items on the arrival of guests, or asks the neighbor's permission to have loaves baked in his oven, or wants to leave some valuables in the neighbor's custody when going out of his house for some days. Thus, the verse means to impress that denial of the Hereafter renders a man so narrow-minded and niggardly that he is not even prepared to make a most minor sacrifice for the sake of others.